

Transforming Program Goals into Measurable Objectives and Action Items

Now that you have been awarded your TIF grant and are beginning the process of designing and implementing your program, you need to transform broadly stated program goals into clear and concise objectives that will guide your project plan. These objectives should be driven by well defined and measurable tasks, or action items. This process, specifying goals – objectives – action items in clear concise realistic and measurable ways is very important. Defining and refining these steps

into a specific timeline helps to create a road map leading to program success. Spending time early on to specify your objectives and action items will greatly simplify required project reporting.

These tips are designed to help you through this process, whether your proposal focused only on broad goals and you need to create objectives and action steps or your proposal contained very specific objectives that may need to be refined.

Terms

Goals are broad expressions of general intentions.

Objectives are narrow expressions of concrete targets that are measurable.

Action steps are tasks that support the attainment of an objective. These are the specific activities whose completion is necessary to reach an objective.

Goals – These are the broad outcomes you wish to achieve. Goals are generally expressed in general terms and should state the ultimate purpose of the project. Goals need to be:

- Clear and concise
- Ideally limited to 4-6 goals
- Realistic and accepted by stakeholders

Objectives – These transform the general project goals into specific targets that reflect the project goals and must be met in order to achieve those goals. Objectives:

- Describe the steps that need to happen to achieve a goal.
- Must be measurable
- Can be placed in a specific timeline

Action Steps – Action steps are the specific activities necessary to meet an objective. They are the concrete, every day actions that constitute your work plan. Action steps should be:

- Incremental and realistic
- Achievable in the short term
- Easily documented

Measuring Objectives and Action Steps

It is very important to develop objectives and action steps that are specific and measurable. Objectives/action steps can be focused on process or outputs. Measurement of your objectives and action steps can be quantitative (e.g., student assessment scores, retention rates) or qualitative (e.g., descriptive classroom observations of teachers, meeting minutes, signed MOU). Measures of process objectives/action steps are more likely to be qualitative and measures of output objectives/action steps are more likely to be quantitative. A single objective can have multiple measures, both qualitative and quantitative.

Sample process objective: Ensure stakeholder involvement by end of year 1.

Sample process action step: Meet with Union representative to sign MOU.

Sample output objective: Increase teacher retention in year 2 by 3 percent.

Sample output action step: Establish retention incentive structure.

Examples

The following examples illustrate the relationship between goals, objectives, and action steps. They are not intended to be comprehensive.

Example 1

Goal: Improve existing databases to link student and teacher data.

Objective: Develop a web based system for teachers and principals to check and verify student-teacher assignments.

Action Steps:

- Conduct needs assessment
- Develop/test system
- Pilot with teachers and principals

Type: Process

Measures: Multiple, including documentation of requirements, decisions, and empirical validation of system operability

Example 2

Goal: Increase student achievement in participating schools.

Objective: Increase percentage of students who score proficient or better on statewide math assessments by 3% in year 2.

Action Steps:

- Establish baseline data
- Implement professional development plan
- Analyze end of year state math assessment scores

Type: Output

Measures: Math baseline data set, teacher professional development records, math state assessment scores